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Caja Del Rio Protection Campaign - Grant

Grant Name	Caja Del Rio Protection Campaign - Grant	Today's Date	12/14/2023
Staff Size	23	Organization Name	Conservation Lands Foundation
Total Membership		Annual Operating Budget	\$8,626,355.00
BIPOC-led	No	Operating Budget Year	
C-Suite Staff		Tax Status/Organization Type	501c3 Organization
Notes			

Project Information

Project/Campaign Name	Caja Del Rio Protection Campaign	Project Address	
Project Location (State or Territory)	NM	Amount Requested from Alliance	\$45,000.00

Proposal Questions

<p>1. Purpose/History Of Organization</p>	<p>The Conservation Lands Foundation was founded in 2007 to protect and steward the National Conservation Lands. Believing that community-based engagement is the blueprint for lasting land conservation, we have built a community of locally-based groups across the West - called our Friends Grassroots Network - which has grown to nearly 90 strong. Alongside this grassroots movement, we work to achieve our mission to protect, restore, and expand the National Conservation Lands through education, advocacy, and partnerships. Our proven approach helps to support climate resiliency and to preserve biodiversity, clean air and water, joyful recreation, cultural resources, and the connection between people and public lands.</p> <p>We recognize that these valuable landscapes are also ancestral lands. As an organization and a leader of the Friends Grassroots Network, we prioritize bringing Indigenous voices back to the table and including underrepresented communities in land conservation decisions.</p>	<p>7. Measurable On-Ground Outcomes</p>	<p>Caja del Rio is well positioned for permanent protection as part of the National Conservation Lands via the Antiquities Act. Caja del Rio is given protections (via mineral withdrawal or otherwise) that supplement an Antiquities Act designation until the administration acts. Illegal shooting on the Caja diminishes due to the BLM's establishment of a properly managed shooting range. A viable, productive path toward Tribally-led protection and co management solutions is achieved, with Santo Domingo and Jemez Pueblos leading the work of Tribal participation in the coalition's process.</p>
<p>2. Final Success</p>	<p>The Caja del Rio's roughly 106,000-acre landscape containing tens of thousands of iconic petroglyphs, countless sites sacred to the area's Pueblo people, resources necessary for Spanish land</p>	<p>8. Evaluate Your Progress</p>	<p>Key benchmarks of progress and success include: By December 2024, the Caja del Rio is positioned to be one of the first Antiquities Act designations by a second</p>

grant families' subsistence, a high degree of climate resiliency critical to ensuring habitat connectivity, 85 miles of multi-use trails, 350 climbing routes at over 20 sites, and over 22 miles of Class III river rapids is permanently protected through an Antiquities Act proclamation or federal legislation for the enduring health and wellbeing of people and planet.

term Biden administration, and/or appropriate companion legislation will be ready for a 2025 introduction. A diverse, organized, and effective constituency advocates for the protection of the Caja del Rio and has the resources needed to build support at the local and national levels. Advocacy results in administrative protections through management planning processes, plan amendments, and conservation designations. Youth education and experiences on the land remain a priority through CLF's involvement with local organizations. The coalition is organized to oppose development that might occur on the landscape, such as the Los Alamos National Labs' transmission line. Additional BLM policies are advanced that elevate conservation and restoration on the Caja del Rio (such as the Public Lands Rule).

3. Location Details

Outside of Santa Fe, New Mexico lies the 106,000-acre Caja del Rio, a region notable for volcanic escarpments and canyons, a diversity of flora and fauna, and the highest concentration of petroglyphs in the state. With only 6% of New Mexico's lands protected as national parks, wilderness, or national monuments, the designation of this landscape (managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service) will safeguard essential waters, wildlife, habitats, and cultures.

The Caja del Rio is known for its petroglyphs, pueblos, and shrines from the Pueblos of the Middle Rio Grande, Navajo, Hopi, Apache, and other Tribes who live in the region or have called this area home for thousands of years. Spanish communities maintain traditional ways of life through the region's resources, including the Rio Grande River and the Santa Fe and Galisteo Basins. These waterways provide high-quality water for the land grant community, as well as for the Pueblos of Cochiti and Kewa and the cities of Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

From riparian to desert to alpine, the myriad of habitats in the Caja del Rio make it home to a variety of species, including lizards, snakes, black bears, elk, and jackrabbits, as well as fish and aquatic life. The area contains important wildlife habitat for keystone species such as the burrowing owl and for the state and federally endangered southwestern willow flycatcher. The Caja del Rio also plays a critical role in connecting a vital wildlife migration corridor that runs along the Upper Rio Grande Watershed from Colorado through New Mexico.

The landscape remains highly

9. TCA Funding Plan

Funding from the Conservation Alliance will enable CLF to continue to: Build momentum among the coalition through effective on-the-ground strategies such as local events that showcase strong public engagement. An example is the coalition-hosted film festival in Albuquerque in August attended by over 120 people and featuring Santa Clara Pueblo Governor Michael Chavarria, Santa Fe Mayor Alan Webber, and State Representative Linda Serrato. Build support on Capitol Hill. This work could include fly-ins to bring advocates to DC. Garner support for permanent protection through site visits for local and national leaders. Elevate the diverse human connection to the Caja del Rio with the end goal of administrative endorsement. Direct resources to bolster public involvement through community events, field trips, and celebrations. For example, this fall Pueblo Action Alliance received a grant from CLF to bring approximately 40 youth and their families from the city to experience the landscape.

ecologically intact and has a high degree of climate resilience, enabling it to provide protection for animals seeking sanctuary from changing climate conditions. Due to its ecological and climatological value, parts of the Caja del Rio are among the top 20% of unprotected BLM and Forest Service lands with the highest conservation value in the lower 48 U.S. states.

Unfortunately, the Caja del Rio is at risk. Lacking protections and adequate management, the area's fragile cultural resources and vital wildlife habitat are threatened by unregulated shooting, poaching of endangered species, illegal dumping, and vandalism of cultural sites, among other misuses. A grant from The Conservation Alliance would support CLF's work to champion the partnerships, infrastructure, and resources necessary to protect this invaluable landscape.

4. Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

CLF is supporting an inclusive and adaptable coalition whose participants seek lasting preservation, stewardship, and Tribally-led co-management for the Caja del Rio. We are seeking a national monument designation through an Antiquities Act proclamation to permanently protect this culturally significant, ecologically flush, and threatened landscape.

The coalition is made up of Indigenous advocates, conservation groups, community leaders, Spanish land grant families, and recreationists who are committed to working collaboratively toward permanent protection and being supportive of Tribally-led solutions for long-term management.

Developed through years of on-the-ground connections, the coalition is high-functioning and representative of the many active Caja del Rio user groups, including people from Albuquerque and Santa Fe, Indigenous youth, traditional conservation groups, and Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO).

Leading the CLF team are Vice President of Conservation Field Programs Charlotte Overby and Associate Program Director New Mexico Romir Lahiri, with strategic support from Government Affairs Director David Feinman and policy guidance from Public Lands Policy Director Kara Matsumoto. With their leadership, the coalition will continue to strengthen and strategically expand local advocacy to reach national decision makers.

Community support for the protection of the Caja del Rio continues to grow, as

10. JEDI Efforts and Impact

CLF began a journey to embed DEI principles and practices in 2015. In 2023, CLF continued to expand on these efforts through a contract with Marcelo Bonta, a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion consultant, to guide our staff through equity growth, specifically defining our individual connections to JEDI values in order to achieve authenticity in our implementation. Out of this work came the development of a staff Equity Charter by our Equity Committee, adopted in November of 2023.

This internal focus has led to impacts including CLF's engagement, amplification, and support of authentic voices in BIPOC communities. CLF has also continued to build inclusive partnerships through activities such as our D.C. fly-in in May for five Indigenous leaders from across the West. Most recently, our board unanimously approved our fall grants docket, 25% of which is allocated to BIPOC-led organizations, an intentional outcome of CLF's focused work on equitable grantmaking the last three years.

demonstrated by the Colorado College's State of the Rockies Project 2023 Conservation in the West Poll. This poll found that 88% of New Mexicans support permanently preserving existing national public lands in the Caja del Rio which would protect vital wildlife habitat and ensure access for outdoor recreation.

The 2023 annual report from the Bureau of Economic Analysis found that New Mexico's outdoor recreation economy continues to bolster the state, creating \$2.4 billion in value added for New Mexico and accounting for 1.9% of state GDP, including nearly 28,000 jobs. The Caja del Rio offers opportunities for activities including camping, rafting, fishing, hunting, biking, and climbing. With the management standards (which include conservation considerations) that come with protective designations, a protected landscape will provide a more sustainable avenue for the region to contribute to positive economic outcomes. Caja del Rio's sprawling, connective landscape will also help achieve positive social impacts, providing accessible recreation for underrepresented communities in the state.

Bolstered by the activation achieved through CLF's and the coalition's successful approaches, three specific goals that this grant would support include:

Developing the diverse, collaborative, and sustainable coalition of local community leaders committed to long-term preservation, responsible stewardship, and adaptive co-management of the Caja del Rio.

Objective: Achieve substantial community-wide support with broadened engagement to advocate for protection at the grassroots and grass tops levels.

Example: A 2023 desired outcome is a reality after persistent advocacy. In September, the BLM assigned a ranger to the Caja del Rio area. CLF's and the coalition's focus is now integrating this ranger into the community as a trusted resource and vital part of maintaining protections.

Ensuring movement on urgent, on-the-ground priorities for Caja del Rio land protection, maintenance, and stewardship.

Objective: Protect the Caja del Rio with direct actions and policies designed to reduce misuse and vandalism until federal protections are achieved and preservation is more enforceable.

Example: Engage in BLM management and decision-making processes. CLF is providing comment on a BLM-provided shooting range, with the goal of finding a community solution to illegal shooting.

CLF is also helping Santa Fe county identify appropriate projects for IRA investment opportunities.

Establish effective communications and branding for the campaign in coordination with the coalition and CLF's Communications Team.

Objective: Equip the campaign with cohesive and consistent communication collateral made up of inspiring visuals and informative takeaways to increase awareness of and investment in protection efforts.

Example: Romir is working with New Mexico Wild to repurpose video content from the CLF-created Caja del Rio story map to raise awareness through avenues such as educational events, film screenings, and meetings with congressional members.

Funding from The Conservation Alliance will help CLF to harness the power of grassroots engagement and provide the necessary strategic guidance to sustain the diverse local support needed to secure a durable designation. By December 2024, we aim to see the Caja del Rio positioned to be one of the first Antiquities Act designations by a second term Biden administration, and/or appropriate companion legislation prepared for a 2025 introduction.

5. Key Decision Makers

CLF and partners continue to rely on a New Mexico delegation which is favorable to public lands conservation. These electeds include Congresswomen Teresa Leger Fernandez and Melanie Stansbury, and Senators Ben Ray Lujan and Martin Heinrich.

Romir continues to engage Senator Heinrich's senior advisor, Mike Sullivan, on the value of seeking protective solutions for the Caja del Rio landscape and facilitating relations with Pueblo-elected officials at a government-to-government level. Senator Heinrich is a strong supporter of the coalition and committed to hearing the voices of the Tribes involved in discussions centered on Caja del Rio protection. Senator Heinrich is also open to using any tools available to achieve protections of the area, including a legislated mineral withdrawal, a key step which would protect the Caja del Rio landscape from any type of energy development for 20 years.

Romir is also regularly in touch with staff from Representatives Leger Fernandez's and Stansbury's offices regarding CLF's work on the Caja del Rio campaign.

As Pueblo governments work to find consensus for protection of the landscape, CLF continues to work with

11. Confidential Items

There is nothing in this proposal that must be kept confidential but a high-level of discretion is always helpful when it comes to strategies for permanent land protections. Additionally, we request that The Conservation Alliance provide notice on any planned public reference to our partner organizations so that we may verify any preferences for anonymity in advance. Thank you for your understanding!

local organizations, Indigenous-led organizations, and conservation groups to maintain continuous, pronounced public support for the protection of this landscape through grassroots work, including organizing clean ups, field trips, and film screenings. We also continue to request that congressional staff communicate consistently with Tribal leaders and pursue appropriate government-to-government interaction around the various options for permanent protection.

6. Elevate Voices

The past six months of Caja del Rio efforts have been centered around supporting local Tribes as they work to find consensus on what protection strategies they envision for the area. While CLF's goal is to ensure that the coalition coalesces around common protection goals and essential language, we must respect the Tribes' sovereignty and the fact that the timeline to achieve this may differ from Western conservation expectations. It is important we steady our approach and navigate Tribal government relationships with respect and intentionality, building trust and ensuring the campaign is rooted firmly in community-wide support.

On this front, CLF has succeeded in forging Tribal and local government connectivity, although a resolution between these groups on a preferred path forward for protections has not yet been achieved. With a change in Pueblo leadership upcoming in January, there is the potential for new traction gained. In the meantime, CLF's unique model enables us to continue advocacy efforts. Having been involved in the civic work to the extent we are able, our focus has shifted to building community investment in the region while nation-to-nation relationships evolve to a decision point.

CLF will provide opportunities for community feedback, building public investment in outcomes for the Caja del Rio. For example, in September the coalition hosted two listening sessions in Santa Fe to discuss protection of and respect for the area.

In a year when online communications will be cluttered with election campaigns, CLF will utilize on-the-ground work to maintain active engagement in Caja del Rio protection efforts. For example, in November the coalition held a clean-up event with approximately 65 volunteers which included help from BLM staff and the city of Santa Fe for the first time in two years. This support from local governments is a demonstration of the progress that is possible through bipartisan grassroots activities such as stewardship.

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